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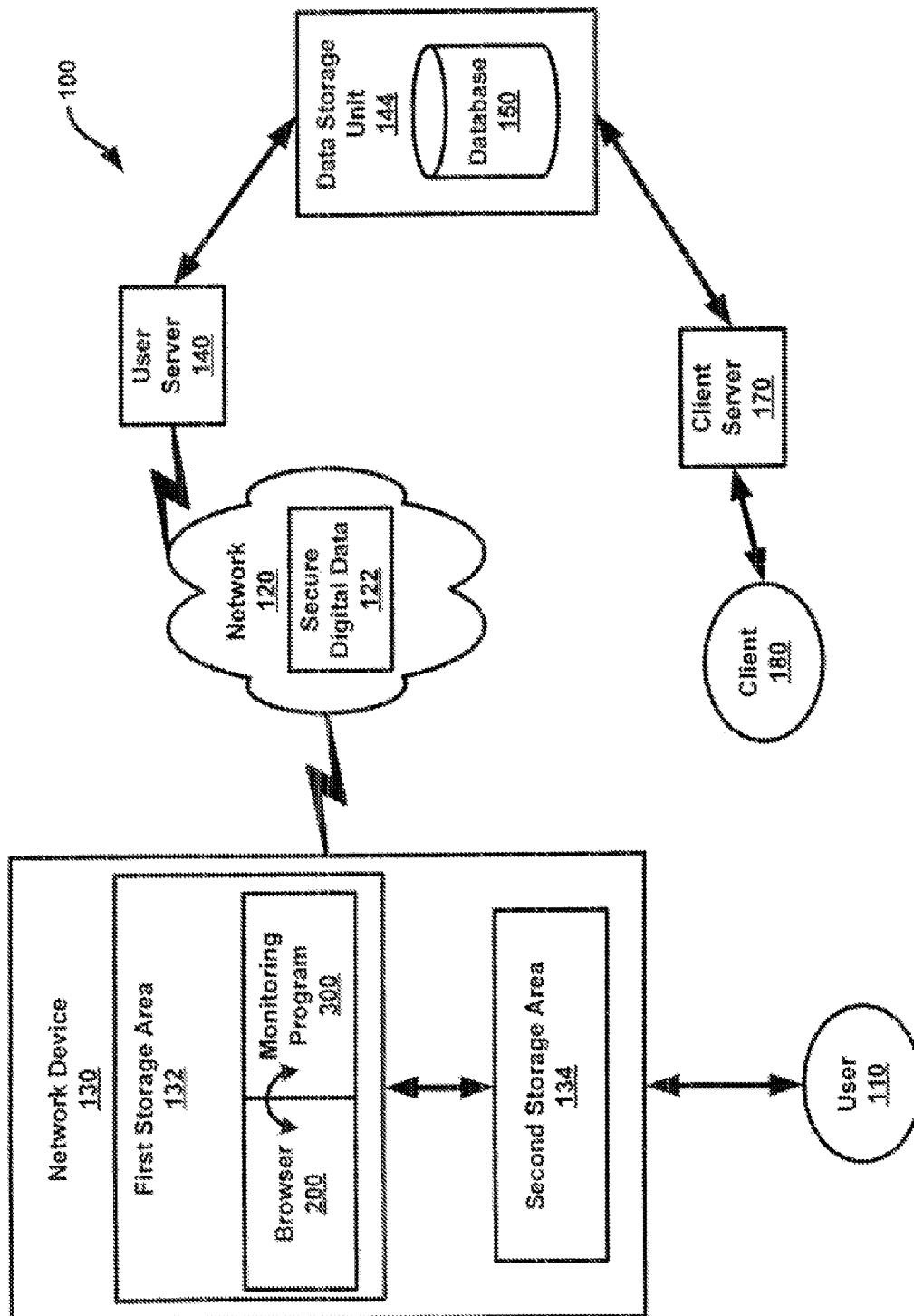


FIG. 1

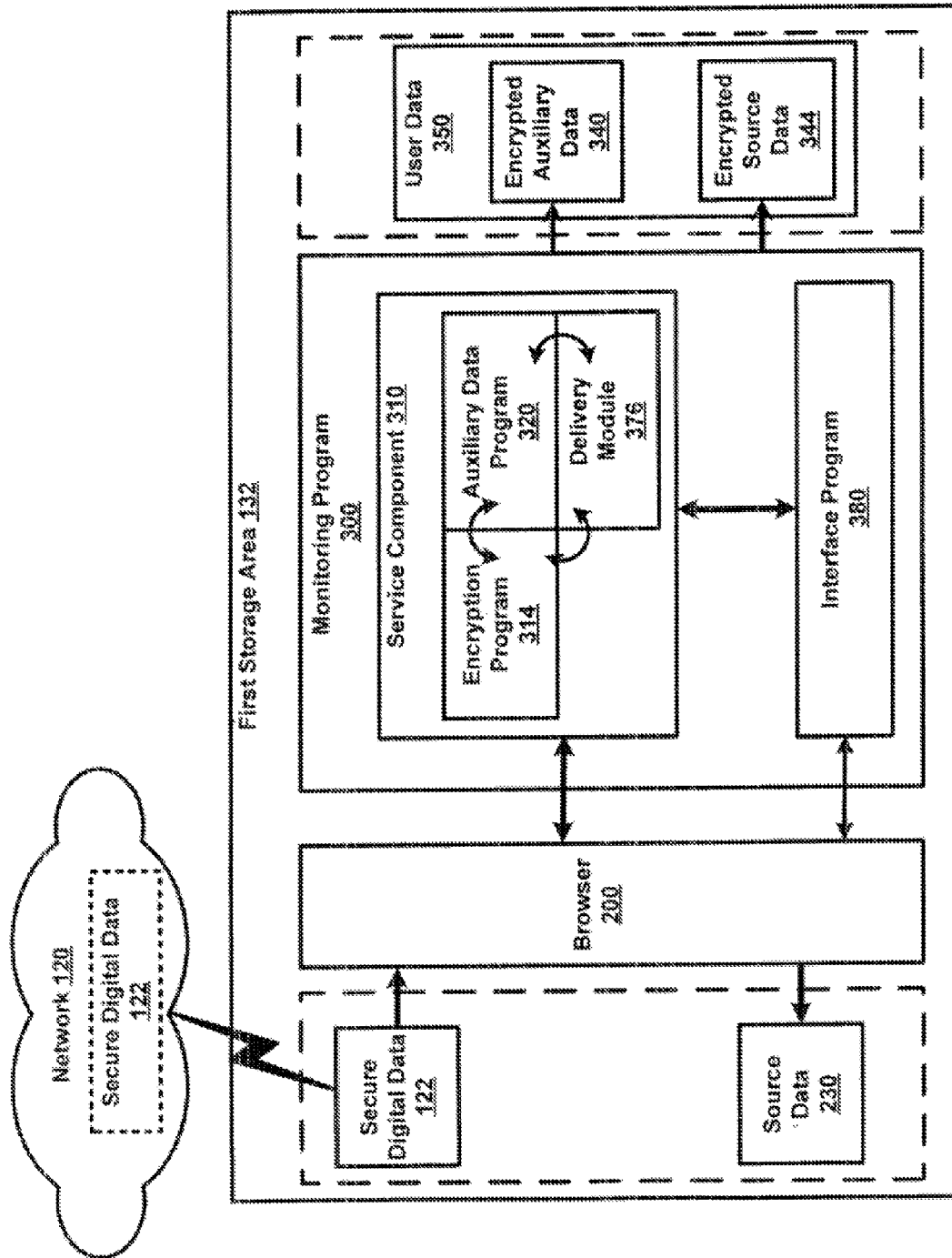


FIG. 2

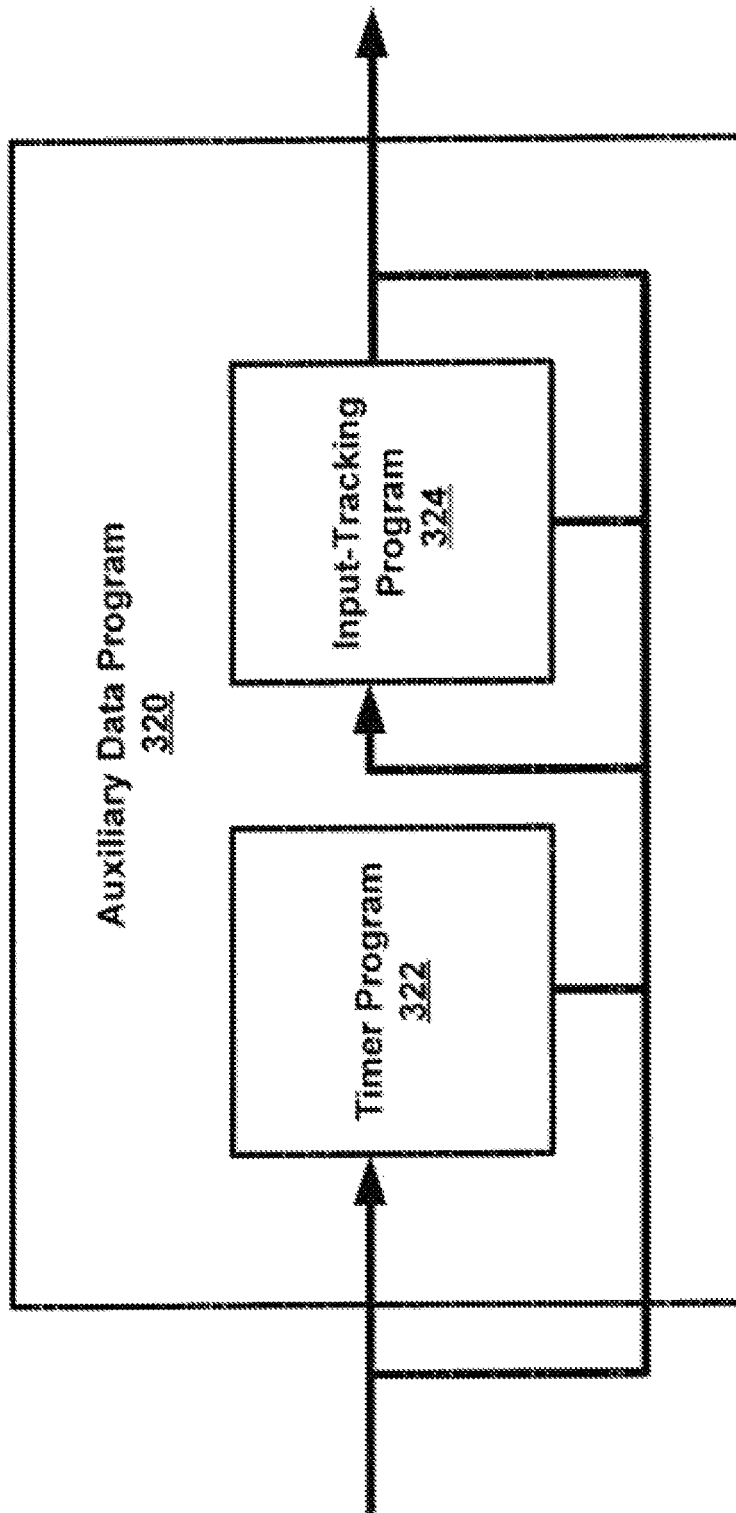


FIG. 3

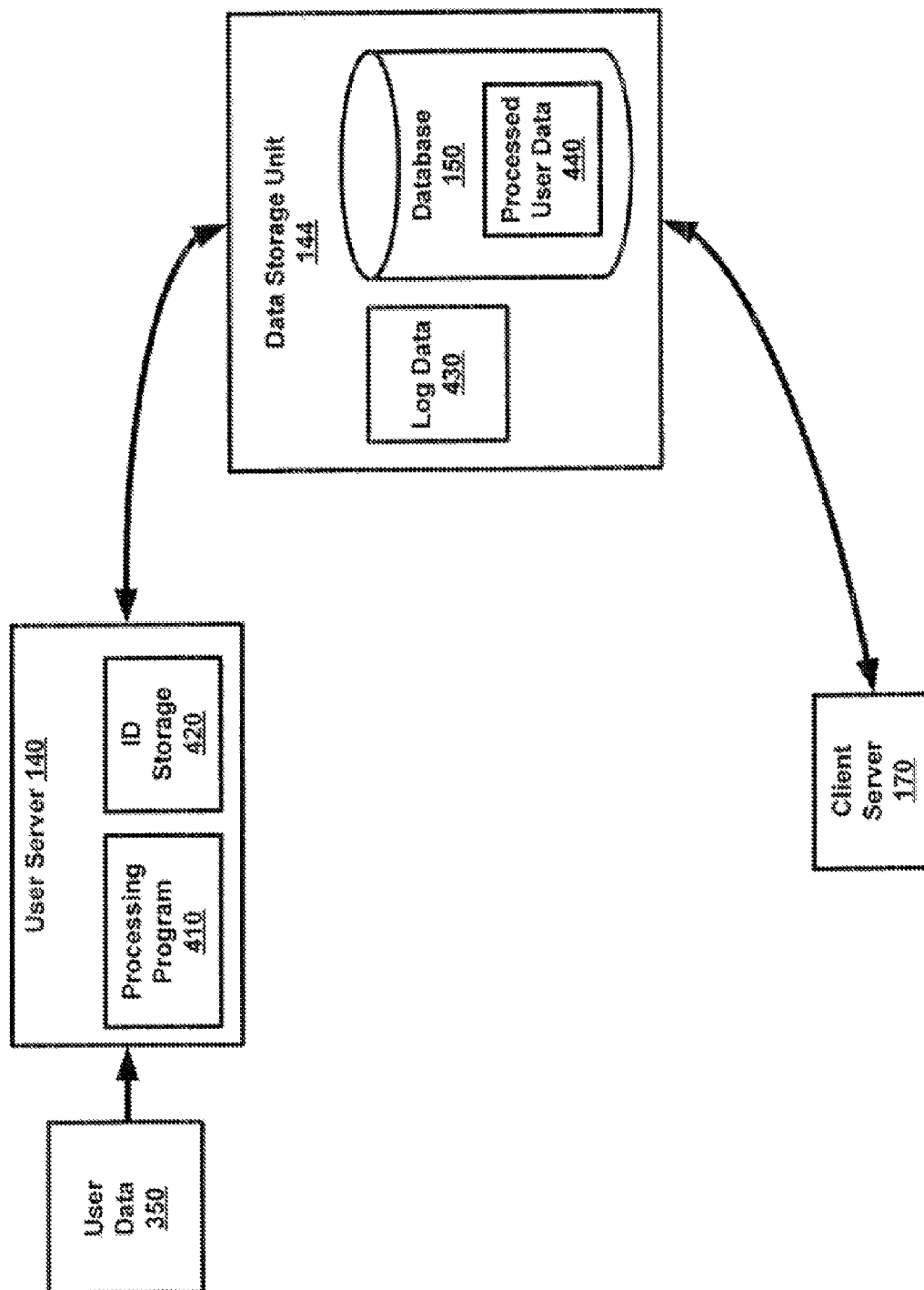


FIG. 4

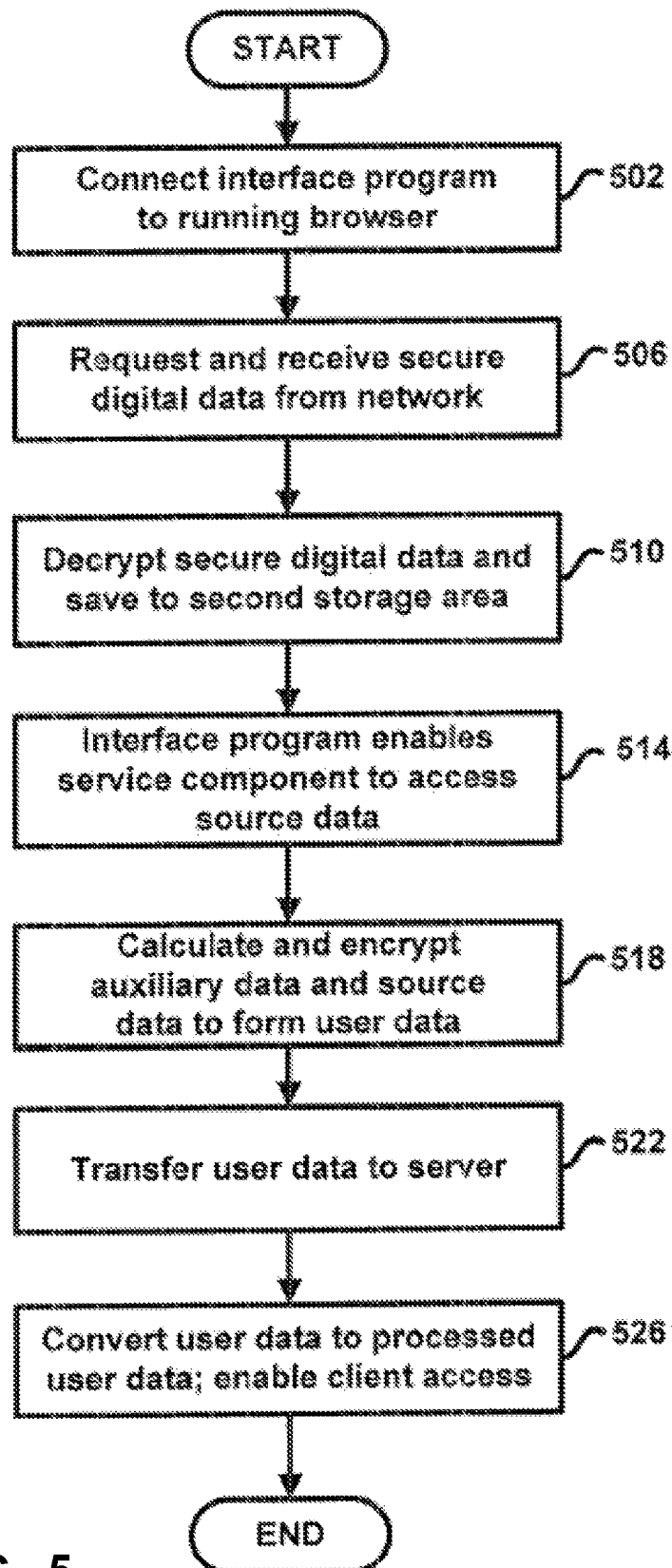


FIG. 5

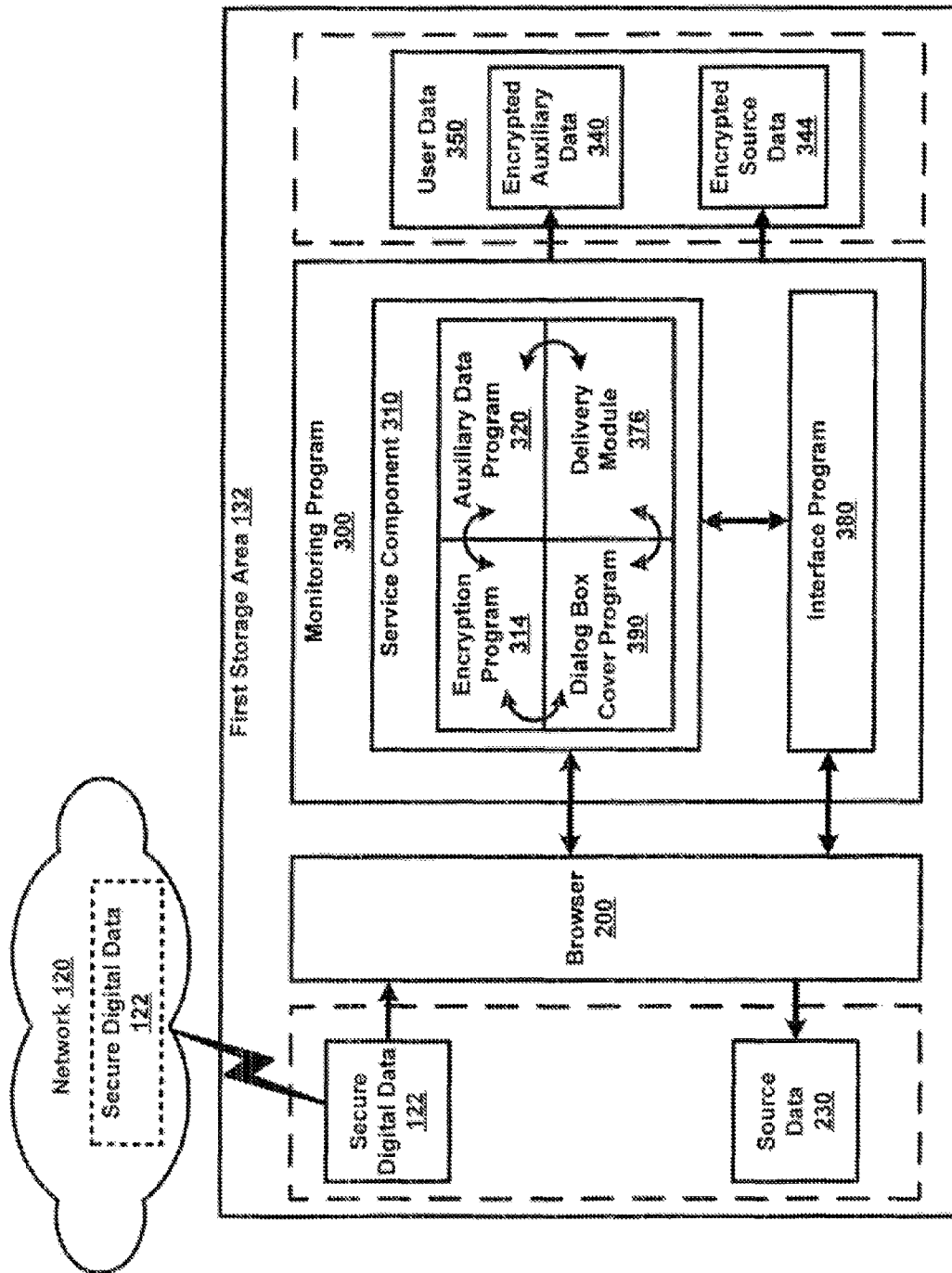


FIG. 6

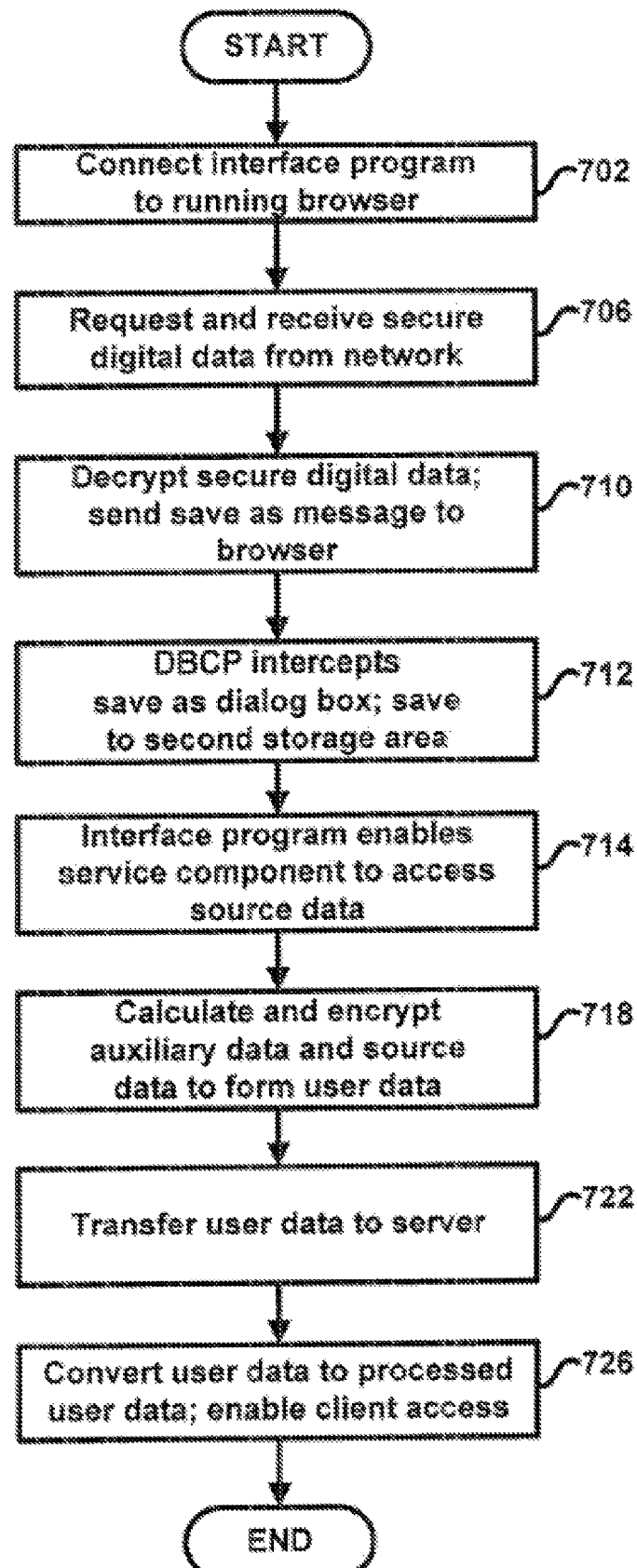


FIG. 7

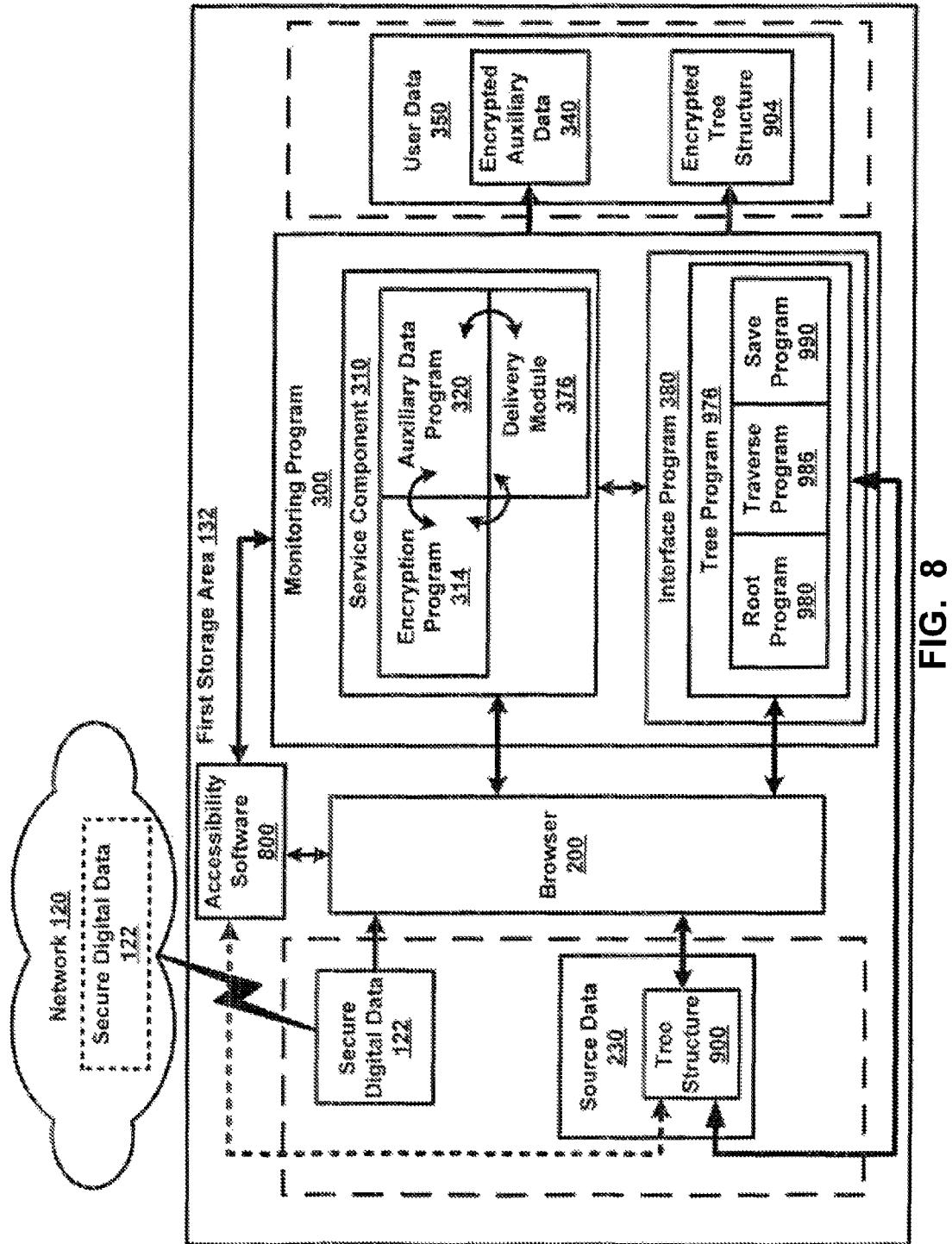


FIG. 8

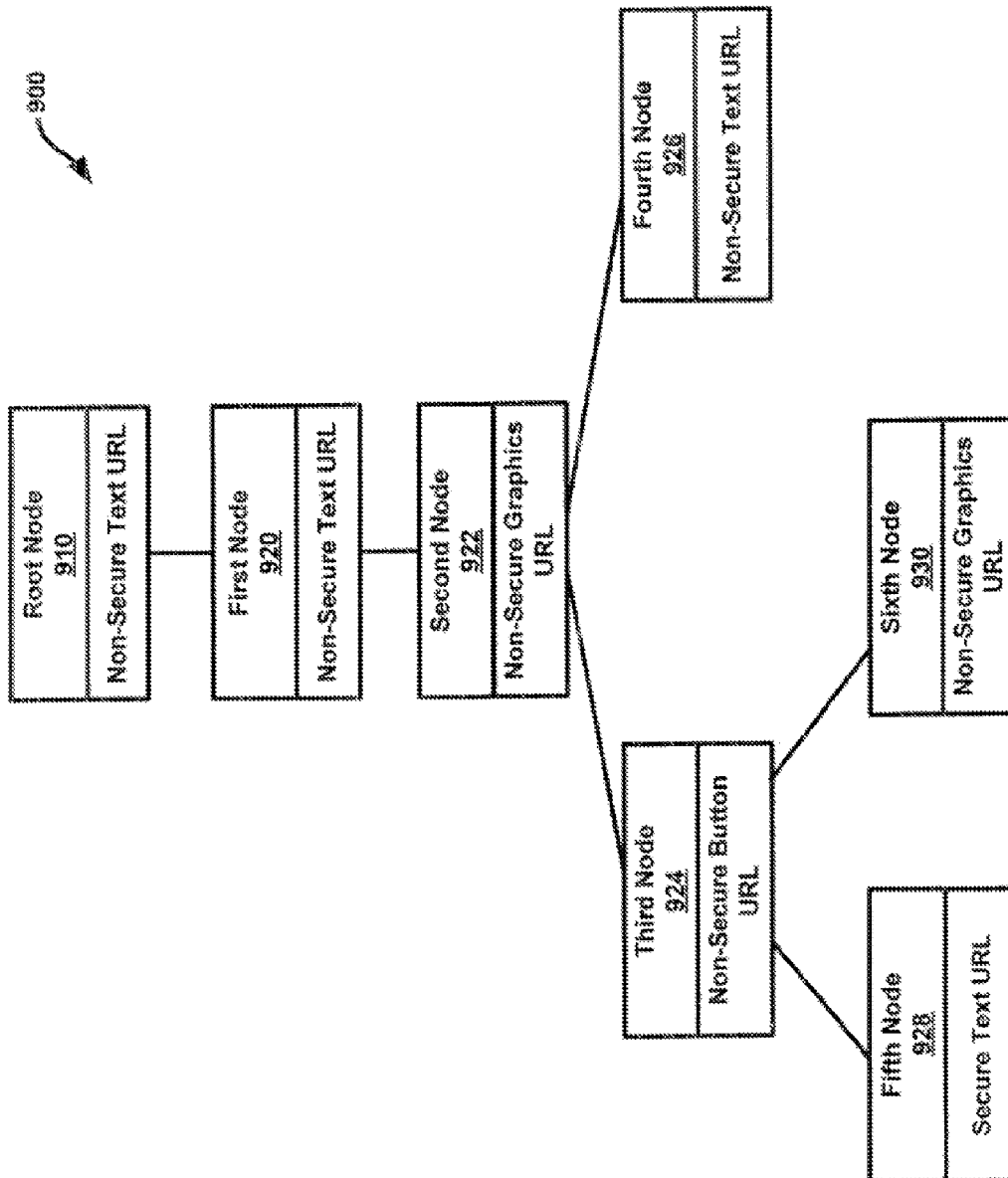
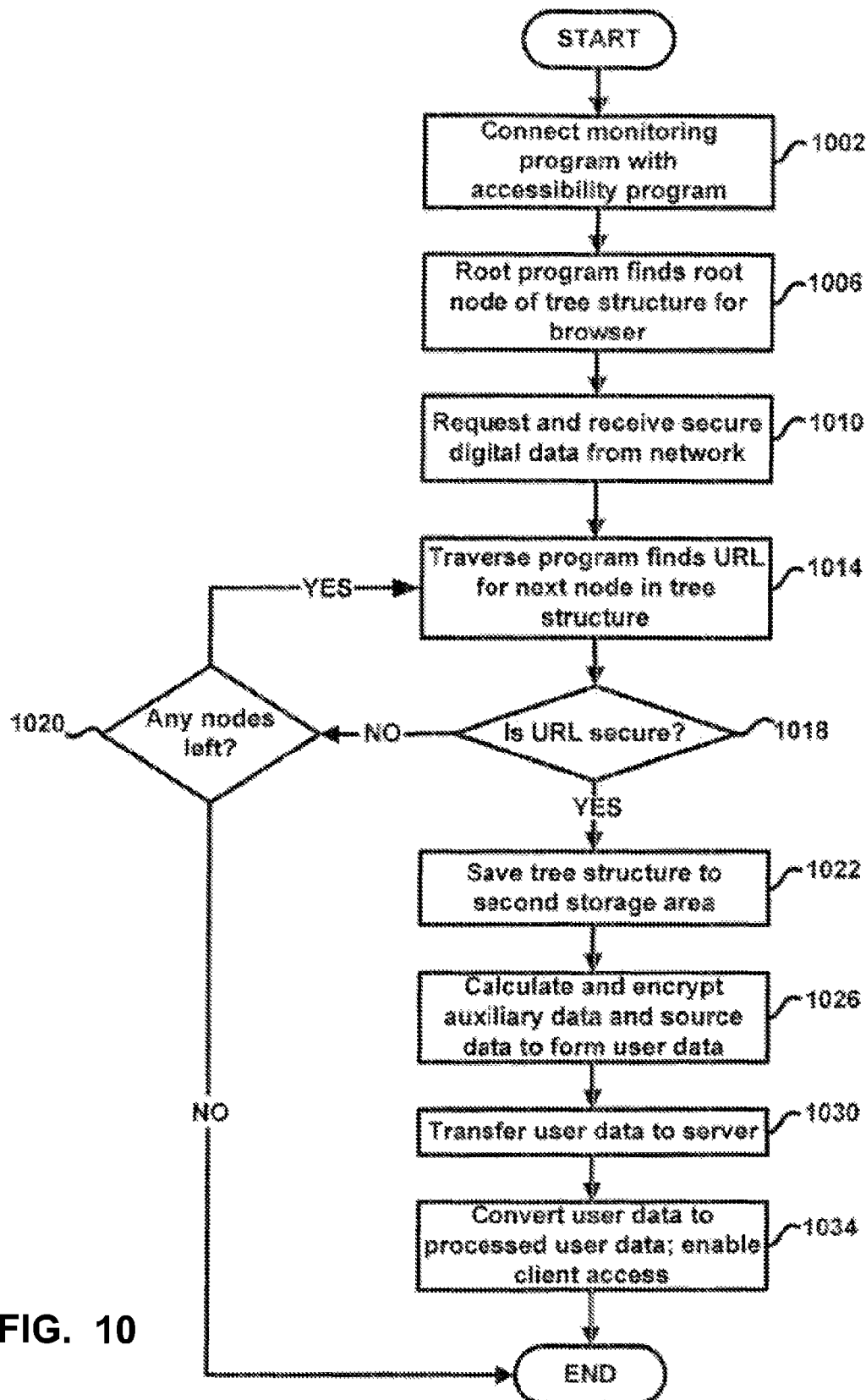


FIG. 9



SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MONITORING SECURE DATA ON A NETWORK

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This patent claims priority to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/618,448, entitled "SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MONITORING SECURE DATA ON A NETWORK," filed on Nov. 1, 2013, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/202,338, which was filed on Jul. 24, 2002 and granted as U.S. Pat. No. 8,271,778 on Sep. 18, 2012, both U.S. application Ser. No. 13/618,448 and U.S. application Ser. No. 10/202,338 are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entireties.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention pertains to the field of monitoring systems. More specifically, the present invention pertains to the field of monitoring systems for secure data transfers on a network such as the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Secure data transfers over computer networks are an important component of electronic commerce. Business transactions between parties from around the world can now occur safely within seconds largely due to the security and reliability that secure data transfers offer. Furthermore, as electronic commerce continues to grow as a part of the world economy, the importance of secure data transfers will continue to increase as well.

By analyzing a representative portion of the secure data transfers that take place on a network such as the Internet, businesses may be given reliable data on the preferences of users, the popularity of certain products, and other valuable information. The data obtained from this analysis can then be used by businesses to plan advertising and marketing campaigns, as well as to help guide future product development and electronic commerce initiatives. Therefore, understanding the purchasing patterns of users engaging in electronic commerce may be very beneficial for many businesses.

An important protocol involved in secure data transfers is the secure sockets layer protocol (SSL). SSL enables private documents to be securely transmitted across public networks such as the Internet by utilizing a public key to encrypt data. The SSL protocol is often used in electronic commerce as a way to safely transmit private user information necessary to complete a transaction, such as the user's billing address and credit card number. The address of web pages utilizing the SSL protocol often begins with "HTTPS", which stands for HyperText Transfer Protocol Secure.

Existing methods of analyzing HTTPS web pages that a user visits on the Internet have only been able to capture the Universal Resource Locator (URL), or address, of the web page. These prior art designs have not been able to capture the actual content of the web page, or data that the user submits.

Accordingly, it is desirable to have a system and method for monitoring secure data (e.g., HTTPS web pages) on a network (e.g., the Internet) that overcomes the above deficiencies associated with the prior art.

SUMMARY

One aspect of an exemplary embodiment provides a network monitoring system including a network for storing secure digital data. The network monitoring system may also

include a network device in communication with a user and the network. Additionally, a server may be in communication with the network, and a browser and monitoring program may interface and be stored in the network device. The network device may receive the secure digital data from the network, and the browser may convert the secure digital data or a portion thereof into source data. Further, the monitoring program may transfer the source data or a portion thereof to the server.

Another aspect of an exemplary embodiment provides a method for monitoring a network storing secure digital data. The method may include transferring the secure digital data from the network to a network device, converting the secure digital data into source data, and forwarding the source data or a portion thereof to a server.

Yet another aspect of an exemplary embodiment may be a monitoring program running on a network device. The monitoring program may include a service component, and an interface program may communicate with the service component and a browser. The network device may receive secure digital data from a network, and the browser may convert the secure digital data into source data. Further, the interface program may enable the service component to access the source data.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary network monitoring system;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary first storage area of the network monitoring system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an exemplary auxiliary data program of the first storage area of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of an exemplary user server, data storage unit, and client server of the network monitoring system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a flow chart of an exemplary first and second method of the network monitoring system of FIGS. 1 and 2;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of another exemplary first storage area of the network monitoring system of FIG. 1, including an exemplary dialog box cover program (DBCP);

FIG. 7 is a flow chart of an exemplary method of the network monitoring system of FIGS. 1 and 6;

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of another exemplary first storage area of the network monitoring system of FIG. 1, including an exemplary tree structure;

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of the exemplary tree structure of FIG. 8; and

FIG. 10 is a flow chart of an exemplary method of the network monitoring system of FIGS. 1 and 8.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Turning now to the drawings, FIG. 1 shows an exemplary network monitoring system **100**. The network monitoring system **100** may include a user **110** connected to a network **120** through a network device **130**. The network monitoring system **100** may further have a data storage unit **144** connected to the network **120** through a user server **140**, and a client **180** connected to the data storage unit **144** through a client server **170**. The data storage unit **144** may further include a database **150**. All components within the monitoring system **100** may be connected to one another via dial-up, wireless, and/or broadband connections. Examples of broadband connections that may be used with the monitoring system **100** include Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), satellite, Trunk Level 1 (T1), Systems Management Server (SMS),

3

cable modem, Ethernet, or Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) connections. Examples of wireless connections that may be utilized with the monitoring system **100** include Cellular Digital Packet Data (CDPD), Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM), wireless LAN, and radio frequency (e.g., Bluetooth) connections. It should be understood that any number of different connection mechanisms not described here may also be utilized with the present embodiment, depending on consumer and/or manufacturing preferences.

In the present embodiment, the user **110** is a person utilizing the network device **130**. However, it should be understood that alternatively, the user **110** may be another electronic device (e.g., portable computer or cellular phone) in communication with the network device **130**. Furthermore, it should be understood that although only one user **110** is shown in FIG. **1**, the network monitoring system **100** may have any number of users. In an exemplary scenario, a group of twenty-five thousand (25,000) users may utilize the network monitoring system **100**. Two thousand (2000) of the users may be chosen by telephone through random digit dialing, and the remainder may be chosen via Internet recruiting. The users chosen by telephone may insure the demographic accuracy and projectability of the users chosen via Internet recruiting. Of course, the number of users and the method of recruiting the users may vary in alternate embodiments.

In the exemplary embodiment of FIG. **1**, the network **120** is the Internet, but alternatively, the network **120** may be chosen from a wide variety of network types or a combination of network types. For example, in an alternate embodiment, the network **120** may be a combination of a corporate local area network (LAN) and a wide area network (WAN).

In addition, the network **120** may store secure digital data **122**. The secure digital data **122** may include any number of secure data formats, such as HTTPS web pages written in HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and encoded within the SSL protocol, or HTML web pages encoded in Secure HTTP (S-HTTP). Additionally, the network **120** may also store other data that may or may not be secure, such as standard HTML web pages, Active-X controls, Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) files, and any number of other data file types.

The network device **130** shown in FIG. **1** may be a personal computer that preferably has at least one input device (e.g., mouse, keyboard, etc.) and utilizes an operating system, such as Windows NT manufactured by Microsoft Corporation (Redmond, Wash.). Alternatively, the network device **130** may be any type of device capable of communicating with the network **120**, such as a hand-held computer, laptop computer, computer workstation, cellular phone, or facsimile device. It should be understood that the network device **130** may have different software and hardware components in alternate embodiments, and the description of commercial devices provided here is merely exemplary.

Additionally, the network device **130** may include a first storage area **132** and a second storage area **134**. The first storage area **132** may be a non-volatile memory (e.g., static random access memory (SRAM)) that stores a browser **200** and monitoring program **300** that interface with one another. However, any other mechanism for storing data may also be used for the first storage area **132**, such as a magnetic hard disk drive, buffer, flash memory, or dynamic random access memory (DRAM). The first storage area **132** may also include any possible combination of different storage mechanisms, such as a combination of a DRAM, a SRAM, and a buffer.

4

The second storage area **134** of the network device **130** is preferably a magnetic hard disk drive, but alternatively may include any mechanism known in the art for storing data (e.g., DRAM, SRAM, buffer, flash memory, etc.). Similar to the first storage area **132**, the second storage area **134** may also include a combination of different storage mechanisms. In alternate embodiments, the network device **130** may have more or fewer storage areas and the browser **200** and monitoring program **300** may be stored in different storage areas.

Turning now to the user server **140** and client server **170**, a wide variety of commercial servers (e.g., database servers) may be used for these devices. For example, the user server **140** may be a Solaris server manufactured by Sun Microsystems, Inc. (Palo Alto, Calif.) and the client server **170** may be a Windows NT server manufactured by Microsoft Corporation. The data storage unit **144** may be any type of storage unit known in the art (e.g., magnetic hard disk drive, flash memory, magnetic tape, etc.). The database **150** of the present embodiment may be a relational database, or any other data managing and/or storing unit known in the art. For example, the database **150** may be an Oracle 9i relational database manufactured by Oracle Corporation (Redwood Shores, Calif.). Of course, any number of other devices may be used for the user server **140**, the client server **170**, the data storage unit **144**, and/or the database **150**.

In addition, although the user server **140** and the database **150** are shown to be separate components in the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. **1**, alternatively, the database **150** may be integral with the user server **140** and encased within the same housing. Similarly, the database **150** may be integral with the client server **170** and encased within the same housing, or the database **150** may be split into two separate databases (e.g., a client and user database), each storing different data. Furthermore, it should be understood that the user server **140** and the client server **170** may be combined into a single server, or that multiple user servers and client servers may be utilized depending on the number of users and clients accessing the network monitoring system **100**.

The client **180** in FIG. **1** may be a person utilizing a network device in order to access the client server **170**, but alternatively, the client **180** may be any type of electronic device capable of communicating with the client server **170** (e.g., a computing workstation that is part of a corporate LAN). Further, although only one client **180** is shown in FIG. **1**, any number of clients may be part of the network monitoring system **100**.

Turning now to FIG. **2**, the exemplary first storage area **132** is shown in greater detail. In the present embodiment, the first storage area **132** stores a browser **200** and a monitoring program **300**. The first storage area **132** may also store different types of data, including secure digital data **122** received from the network **120**, source data **230**, encrypted auxiliary data **340**, and encrypted source data **344**. The encrypted auxiliary data **340** and the encrypted source data **344** may be collectively referred to as user data **350**.

The browser **200** may be a graphics-based program that requests and retrieves data from a network such as the Internet. The browser **200** may be chosen from a wide variety of commercially available browsers, such as Internet Explorer 6.X (e.g., versions 6.0, 6.01, 6.1, etc.) manufactured by Microsoft Corporation or Navigator 4.X (e.g., versions 4.0, 4.01, etc.) manufactured by Netscape Communications Corporation (Mountain View, Calif.). The browser **200** may have a cache, where a number of previously viewed web pages and URLs may be stored. Additionally, the browser **200** may be capable of converting the secure digital data **122** (e.g., a web page encoded within the SSL protocol) into the source data

230 (e.g., a standard HTML web page that is not encrypted). Thus, the source data 230 is preferably a decrypted version of the secure digital data 122. Most commercially available browsers can convert the secure digital data 122 into the source data 230, since this is typically necessary to make secure web pages viewable. It should be understood that a wide variety of browsers not specified here may also be used with the present embodiment. It should be further understood that various non-browser applications, such as I-Seek-You (ICQ), may also be utilized with the present embodiment.

The monitoring program 300 may also include a service component 310 and an interface program 380, both of which may communicate with the browser 200. In the present embodiment, the browser 200 and the monitoring program 300 both may be computer programs written in a programming language, such as C++ or JAVA. Thus, the method of communication between the monitoring program 300 and the browser 200 may be software-based. Of course, this method of communication may be dependent on the type of network device 130 used. Furthermore, the browser 200 and monitoring program 300 alternatively may be combined into one program, or implemented as hardware components.

The service component 310 may further include an encryption program 314, an auxiliary data program 320, and a delivery module 376, all of which may be plug-ins to the monitoring program 300 or another program within the monitoring system 100. As shown in FIG. 2, the encryption program 314 may encrypt data (e.g., the source data 230) that is sent from the network device 130 to the user server 140. The encryption program 314 may utilize a wide variety of encryption algorithms, such as the Blowfish algorithm. For more information on the Blowfish algorithm, one can refer to the paper "Description of a New Variable-Length Key, 64-Bit Block Cipher (Blowfish)" by B. Schneier (Fast Software Encryption, Cambridge Security Workshop Proceedings, December 1993, Springer-Verlag, 1994, pp. 191-204), the contents of which are incorporated in its entirety herein by reference.

FIG. 3 shows the components of the exemplary auxiliary data program 320 in more detail. The auxiliary data program 320 may include a timer program 322 and an input-tracking program 324.

The timer program 322 may calculate timer data (not shown), including the amount of time a web page takes to download, and the amount of time the user 110 has accessed a web page. The timer program 322 may calculate the timer data by accessing a system clock, which is standard on most operating systems. For example, in order to calculate the amount of time a user views a web page, the timer program 322 may begin counting when the web page is first loaded, and stop counting when the user loads a different web page.

The network device 130 may have any number of input devices, such as a mouse, keyboard, or joystick. The input-tracking program 324 shown in FIG. 3 preferably determines input-tracking data (not shown), which may include positions of the cursor moved by the mouse, locations where the mouse is clicked, keystrokes typed on a keyboard, and position and orientation of a joystick. The input-tracking program 324 may determine the input-tracking data by monitoring interrupts that an input device initiates on the operating system, and by reading data about the input device that is available to the operating system.

In the present embodiment, auxiliary data (not shown) may include the timer data, and input-tracking data. Preferably, the encryption program 314 converts the auxiliary data to the encrypted auxiliary data 340, which may be transferred from the monitoring program 300 to the user server 140 across the network 120.

It should be understood that any number of other programs may be part of the auxiliary data program 320, and the description of the timer program 322, and input-tracking program 324 merely illustrates an exemplary embodiment. Likewise, the auxiliary data 340 may include different data than described in this exemplary embodiment, depending on the types of programs that are part of the auxiliary data program 320. For example, in an alternate embodiment, the auxiliary data program 320 may include an advertisement-tracking program for tracking advertisements and banners viewed by the user 110.

The delivery module 376 shown in FIG. 2 preferably sends the user data 350 from the network device 130 to the user server 140 using a data delivery module (e.g., Ethernet driver, modem driver, etc.). It should be understood that the delivery module 376 may also include a proxy (not shown), or a proxy may be separate program within the service component 310. In such an embodiment, proxy settings within the browser 200 and/or the operating system may be adjusted so that the proxy accesses standard HTTP web pages before the browser 200, but HTTPS web pages bypass the proxy and are accessed first by the browser 200. For more information on proxy servers, one can refer to U.S. Pat. No. 5,864,852, the contents of which are incorporated in its entirety herein by reference.

In a first exemplary embodiment, the interface program 380 shown in FIG. 2 is a Component Object Model (COM) object. COM is a specification that enables programs to communicate via objects. Since the browser 200 is preferably a COM-compliant program, such as Internet Explorer 6.X manufactured by Microsoft Corporation, and the monitoring program 300 is also preferably a COM-compliant program, the two programs can communicate via the interface program 380. In this first exemplary embodiment, the interface program 380 may be stored in the address space of the browser 200 and may interface with a browser control interface (e.g., the IWebBrowser2 Interface within the WebBrowser Control in Internet Explorer 6.X). Thus, the interface program 380 may communicate with a running instance of the browser 200 under the COM specification. The contents of the COM specification are hereby incorporated in their entirety herein by reference.

In the present embodiment, the interface program 380 may be called every time the browser 200 requests a secure web page (e.g., secure digital data 122). A standard COM command may be used for this purpose, such as "OnDownloadBegin()", "OnDownloadComplete()", or "OnDocumentComplete()". Also, the interface program 380 may be able to access the source data 230 and request that the source data 230 is saved to the second storage area 134. It should be noted that the COM commands and browser-specific controls described in the present disclosure are merely exemplary, and that numerous other commands and control schemes may be utilized.

Turning now to a second exemplary embodiment, the interface program 380 may be a Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) program. DDE provides a method of communication between computer programs. In the present embodiment, the browser 200 may support DDE, such as Navigator 4.X manufactured by Netscape Corporation, though other browsers and/or network programs may also be utilized.

In the present embodiment, the monitoring program 300 may also support DDE. Thus, the interface program 380 (e.g., DDE program) may interface with a running instance of the browser 200 and the monitoring program 300 using DDE. As in the previous embodiments, the interface program 380 will preferably be called every time the browser 200 requests a secure web page (e.g., secure digital data 122). This may be

accomplished by a DDE command such as "EchoURL()". Also, the interface program 380 will preferably be able to access the source data 230 and request that the source data 230 is saved to the second storage area 134. The DDE command "OpenURL()" may be used for this purpose. In alternate embodiments, different DDE commands may be utilized with the present embodiment. The contents of the DDE specification are hereby incorporated in their entirety herein by reference.

It should be understood that in alternate embodiments, the interface program 380 may be a separate program in communication with the monitoring program 300. Furthermore, the use of a COM object and DDE program as the interface program 380 in the first and second exemplary embodiments, respectively, does not preclude the use of other types or combinations of interface programs.

Turning now to FIG. 4, the user server 140, data storage unit 144, database 150, and client server 170 are shown in more detail. The user server 140 may receive the user data 350, and the user server 140 may include a processing program 410 and ID storage 420. Additionally, the data storage unit 144 may include log data 430 and the database 150 may store processed user data 440. The user data 350 may be filtered by the monitoring system 300 before being sent to the user server 140, so that user-sensitive information (e.g., user's credit card account number and billing address) may be removed.

Once the user data 350 reaches the user server 140, the processing program 410 may decrypt the user data 350 by utilizing the previously mentioned Blowfish algorithm or any other encryption algorithm. The earlier cited reference for the Blowfish algorithm provides information on this encryption/decryption technique.

Typically, most secure web pages have a content-type ID field that identifies the format of the web page. After decrypting the user data 350, the content-type ID field associated with the user data 350 may be compared to content-type ID fields contained within the ID storage 420. In the present embodiment, the ID storage 420 may be a non-volatile memory (e.g., magnetic hard disk drive or SRAM), but any mechanism for storing data may be utilized. Further, more than one content-type ID field may be used to describe the format of a web page in alternate embodiments.

If the content-type ID field of the user data 350 matches a content-type ID field stored within the ID storage 420, the format of the user data 350 may be determined. Subsequently, information contained within the user data 350, such as transaction-related parameters (e.g., the type and price of a transaction, name of vendor, etc.), may then be extracted in the form of the log data 430. User sensitive information, such as credit card information and billing address information, may also be filtered from the user data 350 by the processing program 410 (e.g., if not already done so by the monitoring program 300) so that such information is excluded from the log data 430.

Once the log data 430 is determined, the processing program 410 may parse every item within the log data 430 in order to create processed user data 440. The processed user data 440 may then be stored on the database 150. Furthermore, the log data 430 may be stored in files on the data storage unit 144 outside of the database 150. Additional processing of the log data 430 and/or processed user data 440 may be performed in accordance with consumer and/or manufacturing preferences.

Furthermore, the client server 170 may enable the client 180 to access the processed user data 440 stored on the database 150. Alternatively, the client 180 may also obtain access

to the log data 430. It should be understood that the log data 430 and/or the processed user data 440 may undergo different processing techniques in alternate embodiments, and that the form of the data available to the client 180 may vary. Additionally, in an alternate embodiment, the database 150 may include a plurality of databases that are connected together. For example, in one such embodiment, the log data 430 may be stored on a first database, and the processed user data 440 may be stored on a second database.

Having described the structure and connectivity of the exemplary network monitoring system 100, a first and second exemplary method may now be discussed, as shown in FIG. 5. The first exemplary method uses the first exemplary embodiment of the interface object 380 discussed previously (i.e., the COM object). The second exemplary method uses the second exemplary embodiment of the interface object 380 discussed previously (i.e., the DDE program). For the sake of brevity and clarity, the first and second exemplary methods will now be discussed simultaneously, with the preferred differences between the two methods specifically noted.

In step 502, the interface program 380 may connect with the browser 200, which may be running on the network device 130. As described earlier, this may be accomplished by registering the interface program 380 with the browser 200 and/or loading the interface program 380 into the address space of the browser 200. In the first exemplary method, the connection between the interface program 380 and the browser 200 may occur under the COM specification. In the second exemplary method, the connection between the interface program 380 and the browser 200 may occur using DDE.

In step 506, a request for the secure digital data 122 may be passed from the browser 200 to the network 120, and the browser 200 may call the interface program 380. In the present embodiment, the interface program 380 may be called every time the browser 200 requests a secure web page (e.g., secure digital data 122) from the network 120. The secure digital data 122 may then be downloaded to the first storage area 132 from the network 120.

In step 510, the browser 200 may decrypt the secure digital data 122 (e.g., HTTPS web page) into source data 230 (e.g., a standard HTTP web page). Further, in the first exemplary method, the monitoring program 300 and/or interface program 380 may issue one or more COM commands (e.g., get_Document(), get_body(), and/or get_outerHTML()) to the browser 200 in order to retrieve and access the source data 230. After the monitoring program 300 and/or interface program 380 receive access to the source data 230, the source data 230 may be saved to the second storage area 134. It should be understood that any number and type of COM retrieval commands may be utilized in the present step.

In step 510 of the second exemplary method, the interface program 380 may retrieve and save the source data 230 using DDE. The interface program 380 may ask the browser 200 to reload the secure digital data 122 into a new graphical window behind the graphical window the user sees through a DDE command such as OpenURL(). Each URL link within the secure digital data 122 may then be individually reloaded from the network 120 or from a cache located on the browser 200. Any number of the URL links within the secure digital data 122 may then be converted to source data 230, and the source data 230 may be subsequently saved to the second storage area 134.

In both the first and the second methods of step 510, the second storage area 134 may be a magnetic hard disk drive. By saving the source data 230 to the second storage area 134, the monitoring program 300 may access the source data 230

for a longer period of time, since the second storage area **134** may provide a longer storage time than the first storage area **132** (e.g., SRAM).

In step **514**, the interface program **380** may enable the service component **310** to access the source data **230**. A pointer to the source data **230** stored on the second storage area **134** may be passed from the interface program **380** to the service component **310**. Alternatively, the interface program **380** may utilize shared memory or file mapping to enable the service component **310** to access the source data **230** while it is in the first storage area **132** or on another storage device (e.g., magnetic hard disk drive). The mechanisms for sharing memory may be specific to the operating system utilized within the network device **130**.

In step **518**, the auxiliary data program **320** may calculate the auxiliary data, and the encryption program **314** may convert the auxiliary data into encrypted auxiliary data **340**. Further, the source data **230** may also be converted into encrypted source data **344**. Thus, as shown in FIG. 2, the user data **350** may be formed, including the encrypted auxiliary data **340** and the encrypted source data **344**.

In step **522**, a copy of the user data **350** may be transferred to the user server **140**, and the user data **350** may be deleted from the second storage area **134**. Alternatively, if the connection to the network **120** is not operable, the user data **350** may be retained on the second storage area **134** for a period of time until the network connection is restored.

In step **526**, the user data **350** may be converted to processed user data **440** by the processing program **410**. The client **180** may then access the processed user data **440** on the database **150** through the client server **170**. The client **180** may have to supply an identification and password in order to access the processed user data **440**, but this may vary depending on consumer and/or manufacturing preferences.

Turning now to FIG. 6, another exemplary first storage area **132** is shown that may be used in a third exemplary embodiment. This third exemplary embodiment may be substantially similar to the embodiment utilized in the first exemplary method, except that the service component **310** additionally contains a dialog box cover program (DBCP) **390**. Furthermore, in this exemplary embodiment, the browser **200** may be unable to respond to certain COM and DDE commands, thus preventing the first and second exemplary methods from being used.

Before describing the DBCP **390** in more detail, it should be noted that the browser **200** in this exemplary embodiment preferably has a "save as" functionality that may be chosen by the user **110**. To illustrate, if a user **110** finds a web page that he/she wishes to save, a mouse or other input mechanism on the network device **130** may be used to click on a menu bar of the browser **200**, causing a drop-down menu to appear. The user **110** may choose a "save as" option from the drop-down menu in order to save the web page to the second storage area **134**. The "save as" option may also be invoked by the monitoring program **300** through an Application Program Interface (API) or menu command ID, such as the Microsoft Windows 32 Platform API (Win32 API) command PostMessage(). This command may be sent directly to the browser **200** to call up the "save as" dialog box, and the HTML code or other information within the browser window may then be saved to the first storage area **132**. For more information on Win32 APIs, one can refer to the Microsoft Software Developer's Kit (SDK) for Win32 API, the contents of which are incorporated in their entirety herein by reference.

In the present embodiment, the DBCP **390** may communicate with both the browser **200** and the interface program **380** using Win32 APIs. Preferably, when the interface program

380 invokes the "save as" option, the DBCP **390** prevents the user **110** from seeing the "save as" dialog box. Thus, the user **110** is preferably not disturbed while accessing the network **120**. The DBCP **390** preferably hides the dialog box by moving it off a display screen of the network device **130**, or behind the graphical window of the browser **200**.

Turning now to FIG. 7, a third exemplary method utilizing the DBCP **390** is shown. Steps **702**, **706** may be substantially similar to steps **502**, **506**, respectively, of the first exemplary method. In step **710**, the browser **200** may decrypt secure digital data **122** (e.g., an HTTPS web page) downloaded from the network **120** and convert it to source data **230** (e.g., an HTTP web page). Additionally, the interface program **380** may issue an API and/or menu command ID (e.g., Win32 API postMessage()) to the browser **200** to save the source data **230** to the second storage area **134** by selecting the "save as" function of the browser **200**.

In step **712**, the DBCP **390** may intercept the "save as" dialog box and prevent the user **110** from seeing the dialog box, and the source data **230** may then be saved to the second storage area **134**. The remaining steps in the third exemplary method (steps **714-726**) may be substantially similar to steps **514-526**, respectively, in the first exemplary method.

Turning now to FIG. 8, another exemplary first storage area **132** is shown that may be used in a fourth exemplary embodiment. This embodiment may be substantially the same as the embodiment utilized in the first exemplary method except that the interface program **380** may include a tree program **976**, and the source data **230** may include a tree structure **900**, which may be an organization of nodes containing data. The tree program **976** may further include a root program **980**, a traverse program **986** and a save program **990**. Furthermore, the first storage area **132** may also contain accessibility software **800** in communication with the tree structure **900**. As shown in FIG. 8, both the accessibility software **800** and the tree structure **900** may be in communication with the browser **200** and the monitoring program **300**. Further, FIG. 8 shows an encrypted tree structure **904**, which may be an encrypted version of the tree structure **900**.

The accessibility software **800** preferably enables data that is accessed by programs running on the network device **130** to be represented within a tree structure. For example, in this exemplary embodiment, the tree structure **900** corresponds to the browser **200** and therefore, the content that is shown on the browser's graphical window may be represented within the various nodes of the tree structure **900**.

Furthermore, accessibility programs often enable programs to communicate with one another by allowing each program to access the tree structures of other programs. This feature often enables programs to be customized for people with disabilities, such as individuals who have poor vision or are hard of hearing. An example of the accessibility software **800** that may be used with the present embodiment is Microsoft Accessibility API, manufactured by Microsoft Corporation. More information on the Microsoft Accessibility API can be found in the Microsoft Accessibility Applications Software Developer's Kit (MSAA SDK). The MSAA SDK is hereby incorporated in its entirety herein by reference. It should be understood that this description of a commercial embodiment of the accessibility software **800** is intended to illustrate, not limit, the spirit and scope of the present embodiment.

It should be further understood that elements of the accessibility program **800** or the entire program itself may be integrated with the tree program **976**. For example, the tree program **976** may contain elements and functionality obtained from the accessibility program **800**. Furthermore, in

11

this exemplary embodiment, the root program 980, the traverse program 986, and the save program 990 may all use commands from the MSAA SDK. Additionally, in an alternate embodiment, the root program 980, the traverse program 986 and/or the save program 990 may be separate from the tree program 976, and may be stored outside of the monitoring program 300.

Turning now to FIG. 9, the exemplary tree structure 900 is shown in more detail. The tree structure 900 may include any number of nodes containing data related to the content of a web page accessed by the browser 200. In the present embodiment, a root node 910 may form the root of the tree structure 900. A first node 920 may be connected below the root node 910, and a second node 922 may be connected below the first node 920. A third node 924 and a fourth node 926 may be connected below the second node 922, and a fifth node 928 and a sixth node 930 may be connected below the third node 924. It should be understood that the number and organization of nodes within the tree structure 900 may vary in alternate embodiments, depending on the type of browser 200 utilized, the content of the web page accessed, and/or the desired functionality of the tree structure 900.

The root node 910 may contain general information relating to the data accessed by the browser 200, such as the title of the web page accessed. The root node 910 may also provide a starting place when searching the tree structure 900. The other nodes 920-930 within the tree structure 900 may contain secure or non-secure URL links, such as text, graphics, and button URL links. In the present embodiment, nodes 920, 922, 924, 926, and 930 contain non-secure URL links, and the fifth node 928 contains a secure text URL link. However, it should be noted that in alternate embodiments, any of the nodes 910-930 may contain any type of data known in the art (e.g., lists of text items, graphical icons, etc).

Having described the tree structure 900, the tree program 976 may now be discussed. The tree program 976 may include the root program 980, the traverse program 986, and the save program 990. The root program 980 may enable the interface program 380 to find the root node 910 of the tree structure 900. In the present embodiment, this may be accomplished by utilizing the AccessibleObjectFromWindows command found in the MSAA SDK, though it should be understood that other commands may be utilized with the present embodiment.

The traverse program 986 may traverse the nodes of the tree structure 900 after the root program 980 has already found the root node 910 of the tree structure 900. Further, the traverse program 986 may read the data stored in each node of the tree structure 900 and determine whether the URL stored in that node is secure. The WM_GetObject command found in the MSAA SDK may be used in this exemplary embodiment by the traverse program 980 to traverse the tree structure 900. It should be understood that in alternate embodiments, the method of traversing the tree structure 900 may vary, and that other programs and commands outside of the accessibility program 800 and tree program 976 may be utilized to traverse the tree structure 900.

The save program 990 may save any number of nodes within the tree structure 900 to the second storage area 134. This may be done by traversing through the entire tree structure 900 using the traverse program 986 and saving each relevant node (e.g., node containing secure data) individually to the second storage area 134. Of course, the method of saving the tree structure 900 may vary in alternate embodiments and may depend on the file structure and/or operating

12

system of the network device 130. For example, the entire tree structure 900 may be saved all at once, or in a piecemeal fashion.

Turning now to FIG. 10, a fourth exemplary method utilizing the accessibility software 800 is shown. In step 1002, the accessibility software 800 may be connected to the monitoring program 300 through the tree program 976, and components of the accessibility software 800 may be loaded into the tree program 976.

In step 1006, the root program 980 may find the root node 910 of the tree structure 900 corresponding to the browser 200. In step 1010, the browser 200 may request and receive a secure web page (e.g., the secure digital data 122) from the network 120, as in previously described step 506.

In step 1014, the traverse program 986 may find a URL stored within a node in the tree structure 900. For example, in this exemplary embodiment, the traverse program 986 may begin by finding the URL associated with the root node 910. The method then proceeds to step 1018, where the traverse program 986 may determine whether the URL associated with the node being accessed is secure (e.g., whether the URL points to an HTTPS web page).

If the URL is not secure, the method proceeds to step 1020, where the traverse program 986 may determine whether there are any other nodes left in the tree structure 900 to be checked. If there are no other nodes in the tree structure 900 to be checked, the method ends. However, if there are nodes left in the tree structure 900 to be checked, the method loops back to step 1014, and the traverse program 986 moves down the tree structure 900 to the next node. This loop may continue until the traverse program 986 has checked the entire tree structure 900 and found no secure URLs, or the traverse program 986 finds a secure URL.

Corresponding to the exemplary tree structure 900, the present method may loop between 1014 and 1020 until the traverse program 986 reaches the fifth node 928, which contains a secure text URL. The method may then proceed to step 1022, where the save program 986 saves the tree structure 900 to the second storage area 134. Alternatively, only a portion of the tree structure 900 (e.g., the fifth node 928) may be saved to the second storage area 134.

In step 1026, the auxiliary data program 320 may calculate auxiliary data (not shown) from the tree structure 900 instead of from the source data 230 as in previous embodiments. The auxiliary data may then be converted into encrypted auxiliary data 340 by the encryption program 314. Additionally, the encryption program 314 may convert the tree structure 900 into an encrypted tree structure 904. The user data 350 may thus be formed, including the encrypted auxiliary data 340 and encrypted tree structure 904.

In step 1030, the delivery module 376 may transfer the user data 350 to the user server 140. The user data 350 may then be deleted from the second storage area 134. Alternatively, if the connection to the network 120 is not operable, the user data 350 may be retained on the second storage area 134 for a period of time until the network connection is restored.

In step 1034, the user server 140 may utilize the processing program 410 to convert the user data 350 into log data 430. The manner in which the user data 350 is converted into log data 430 is preferably similar to previous exemplary embodiments, except that the processing program 410 may extract the log data 430 from the tree structure 900. The log data 430 may then be parsed and converted into processed user data 440, similar to previous embodiments. Further, the log data 430 may be stored on the data storage unit 144, and the processed user data 440 may be stored on the database 150. The client 180 may then access the processed user data 440 on

13

the database **150** through the client server **170**. The client **180** may have to supply an identification and password in order to access the processed user data **440**, though this may vary in alternate embodiments.

The exemplary embodiments presented here may have numerous advantages. By providing a system and method for monitoring secure data transfers, the present embodiments may enable tracking the content of secure web pages viewed by a user and secure data that a user submits over a network such as the Internet. A wide range of useful data may be gathered, such as information about user preferences, characteristics of electronic commerce transactions, and popularity of various goods and services. Such information may help businesses design products and services that match the needs of users, which may improve both the quantity and the quality of goods and services that can be purchased online.

It should be understood that a wide range of changes and modifications may be made to the embodiments described above. For example, the monitoring program **300** may include any number or combination of the different embodiments of the interface program **380**, thus enabling the monitoring program **300** to communicate with the browser **200** under a variety of protocols. Additionally, the connection between the client **180** and the client server **170**, and/or the connection between the user **110** and the network device **130** may include a connection through the network **120**. In addition, the interface object **380** may use alternate mechanisms for communicating with the browser, such as an Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) standard protocol handler, where OLE is a protocol that works within the COM specification to further define the manner in which certain COM-compliant objects may communicate. Further, the monitoring program **300** may include a decryption program to decrypt the secure digital data **122** downloaded from the network **120**. It should therefore be understood that the foregoing description illustrates rather than limits the present invention, and that it is the following claims, including all equivalents, which define this invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of monitoring, the method comprising:
 instructing a browser on a network device to decrypt secure digital data and store the decrypted secure digital data in a first storage area of the network device, the secure digital data received from a content provider in communication with the network device, the instructing of the browser performed by a processor of the network device executing a monitoring program, the monitoring program received from a monitoring entity;
 accessing the decrypted secure digital data from the first storage area to generate a tree structure associated with the decrypted secure digital data;
 when a node of the tree structure includes a secure uniform resource locator (URL), storing the node of the tree structure associated with the secure URL in a second storage area;
 determining auxiliary data from the stored node of the tree structure;
 filtering the auxiliary data to remove sensitive information;
 encrypting the auxiliary data; and
 transmitting the encrypted auxiliary data to a server of the monitoring entity to monitor activity of the browser, the server being different from the network device and different from the content provider.
2. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data includes timer data and input tracking data.

14

3. The method as defined in claim 2, wherein the timer data includes at least one of a duration of content download, a duration of browsing activity, or a duration of exposure to a web page.

4. The method as defined in claim 2, wherein the input tracking data includes at least one of a cursor position, spatial input locations with respect to the display of the network device, keystrokes, or an orientation of a peripheral input device.

5. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the auxiliary data is gathered in a secure hypertext transfer protocol session.

6. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the sensitive information further includes credit card and address information.

7. An apparatus comprising:

a storage device including instructions for execution by a hardware processor in communication with a network device, the instructions, when executed, to cause the hardware processor to:

instruct a browser on the network device to decrypt secure digital data and store the decrypted secure digital data in a storage area of the network device, the secure digital data received from a content provider in communication with the network device; and

access the decrypted secure digital data from the storage area to generate a tree structure associated with the decrypted secure digital data;

when a node of the tree structure includes a secure uniform resource locator (URL), determine auxiliary data from the node of the tree structure;

filter the auxiliary data to remove sensitive information;

encrypt the auxiliary data; and

transmit the encrypted auxiliary data to a server of a monitoring entity to monitor activity of the browser, the server being different from the network device and different from the content provider.

8. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the auxiliary data includes timer data and input tracking data.

9. The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the timer data includes at least one of a duration of content download, a duration of browsing activity, or a duration of exposure to a web page.

10. The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the input tracking data includes at least one of a cursor position, spatial input locations with respect to the display of the network device, keystrokes, or orientation of a peripheral input device.

11. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the auxiliary data is gathered in a secure hypertext transfer protocol.

12. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the sensitive information further includes credit card and address information.

13. A tangible computer readable storage device or storage disc comprising instructions that, when executed, cause a network device to execute a monitoring program to at least:

instruct a browser on the network device to decrypt secure digital data and store the decrypted secure digital data in a storage area of the network device, the secure digital data received from a content provider in communication with the network device, the instructing of the browser performed by a processor of the network device executing the monitoring program, the monitoring program received from a monitoring entity;

access the decrypted secure digital data from the storage area to generate a tree structure associated with the decrypted secure digital data;

15

when a node of the tree structure includes a secure uniform resource locator (URL), determine auxiliary data from the node of the tree structure;

filter the auxiliary data to remove sensitive information; encrypt the auxiliary data; and

transmit the encrypted auxiliary data to a server of the monitoring entity to monitor activity of the browser, the server being different from the network device and different from the content provider.

14. The storage device or storage disc according to claim 13, wherein the auxiliary data includes timer data and input tracking data.

15. The storage device or storage disc according to claim 14, wherein the timer data includes at least one of a duration of content download, a duration of browsing activity, or a duration of exposure to a web page.

16. The storage device or storage disc according to claim 14, wherein the input tracking data includes at least one of a cursor position, spatial input locations with respect to the display of the network device, keystrokes, or orientation of a peripheral input device.

17. The storage device or storage disc according to claim 13, wherein the sensitive information further includes credit card and address information.

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25

16